

wide awake ; my mistake by charjace

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti)

Genre: Alcohol Abuse, Implied Suicide Attempt, Implied/Referenced Homophobia, M/M, OC's & Other Characters used to fill gaps, Panic Attacks, Rebel Eddie, Tutor Richie Tozier

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Summary:

they haven't seen each other in years, so much has changed - but old feelings haven't and get relit

wide awake ; my mistake

Author's Note:

title has nothing to do with the fic, it just a line from the song i was listening to when i wanted to give a title to my work, but it's from all time low's break your little heart.

this is the better version, and the one i'm more proud of and yes i am using the same ocs again.

It was a nice warm day outside as he laid himself on the grass field in school, his head in his friend's lap, it was just out of reach of the teachers view, and when they did 'check' around the place, they barely ever came here which is why he and his friends love the place. It's where you'd find them during the classes they hated, or just when they felt like it. They were getting by alright – barely that the teachers have given up, and only care that they're *passing* , which they are. Though, he's not exactly passing Maths, and his teacher was organizing a tutor for him. His friend, Harmony, whose lap his head was in, passed him the cigarette she had been smoking before he had arrived after his meeting with his Maths teacher. He took it, taking a drag and slowly letting it out as he watched their other friends come. Or well, only a few of them. He waves at them, and smiles when Travis pulls out a huge bag of lollies for them to pass around.

He took a few drags before he ended up giving the cigarette back to Harmony, sitting himself up so he could munch on some of the sweets. Years ago, he would be watching *how much* sugar he was in taking , not wanting to end up as wide as his mother, not wanting to contract anything that too much sugar can do. But, right here and right now? He didn't care as he stuffed a handful into his mouth.

Travis was talking to him about their next track meet that their coach was wanting them to push harder, and work harder. The usual, *we gotta win* stuff, and they laughed and joked as they munched and smoked. Seph was doodling in a book a few new quick sketches for the next time she's giving out stick 'n pokes. He's got one on his inner right wrist, he had asked Seph a lot of questions about it before he

got it done. It was a simple *LC* , and none of his friends questioned why he picked it.

That tattoo, would be what his mother would have called his 'gateway drug'. Oh, how she hated his new friends, just as much as she despised and blamed his old ones, she has always blamed his friends, new and old, for everything that goes so much as *wrong* in his life. His broken arm? His friend's fault, not like it was the school bully. Him running in gym? His friends, and his teachers' fault – it was *him* that wanted to do it. The tattoo? That was *Seph's* fault, as well as the lip and septum piercing that fitted just right on him. Nothing was *ever* Eddie's fault, nor was it ever *his mother's*? Him smoking or drinking? His friends, not like he had a single choice in it.

But, how little does she know her son anymore. He put as much distance as he can from her, he's realised how *bad* she is, and the way she was trying to control him and keep him as her little *thing* to play with. One night, almost six months ago, he had been kicked out of the house after a huge fight with her. She had been going off on her usual rant about how he was *sick* , about how his friends weren't helping that. That he shouldn't surround himself with people like *that* .

"Like what mother?" He had questioned, having had enough of this for the tenth time this week, it was only Wednesday.

"You know, the queer kind." She had replied, hesitating just a little with using the word 'queer' like she wasn't sure she could use the word.

"You say that as if being queer is a bad thing."

"It is honey, they're all sick. They're going to get you sick, I know they are. Its why you take medication to help it."

"Fuck you! Fuck you mother! They are not sick, nor am I! I'm just fucking gay!" His eyes went wide as the words he yelled out came back to his ears. Oh, how he had not planned to let that cat out of the bag until he was so far away from her. Yet, here he was – watching as his mother's face went red, her eyes going wide and was that tears in her eyes?

"See! You are sick Eddie-Bear! They got to you."

"They didn't mother, I'm gay! I like guys, I want to kiss guys, date them, and I want to fuck them," How he knew that would drive it right home, how he knew it and knew how this would end – he didn't care at the point in time. "I always have, and always will!"

"No, that is not true."

"Bullshit! I have. Bill, my first crush. I think you knew it too, and it scared you. I remember for a small while, you would say I couldn't play with him, saying I was sick! Then, then..." Eddie's eyes widened as his mind starts to click things into place. He had been on the verge of telling his friends his little secret. Of telling a certain someone about a certain crush when he was told he was moving to the other side of town, to a new school with no way to get to his friends with time to actually do anything together. "You always have known, haven't you? That's why you can't tell me what my sickness is. Well, guess what mother, I guess I am so fucking sick then. You can't cure this, no pills or anything will do. I am fucking gay mother; you made a queer. Deal with it!"

"Out! Do not come back until you have come to your senses and want to get better," His mother yelled in return, "Eddie, I love you, but you need to get better, please."

"No! I guess I'll leave then," Eddie says before storming out of the house, going over to his car that his mother was hesitant to let him get, but he had saved up for it. He drove himself to Harmony's place where he is now currently living. His friends had taken to going to his home, and raiding his room for his things because he was not going back to that place.

Eventually, they go back to their last classes of the day. Eddie goes straight to his job that he has so that he has some kind of money, it was a small diner run by Harmony's uncle who was more like a father figure than her own father, Ethan had offered the job after hearing about what had went down. Walking in he was greeted with hellos from the other staff members before he changed into his uniform and clocked in.

His shift was going great, there was a small rush at dinner time – but it wasn't anything they couldn't handle, most of them were regulars and it was a nice steady pace. He was sitting outside of the place on his break, smoking a cigarette when he thought he heard his name

being called. Looking up, he didn't see any of his co-worker's calling him back in, and it wasn't until he heard his name again that he pinpointed a girl with red curls calling out to him, waving at him. She walked closer and he smiled, it was Bev, he hasn't seen her in years.

When she is close enough, she wraps him up in a hug pulling away with a smile upon her face. Her eyes wonder down to the cigarette in his hand, and she raises her eyebrows in question, "I... yeah," He says, before holding it out to her, and watches as she takes it and takes her own drag, "Somethings never change."

"And some do," Bev says as she gestures towards Eddie before handing the smoke back, "How's it going Eddie?"

"Oh, you know. Found out my asthma was fake, smoking, piercings and tattoos. Usual teenage stuff, I even got the *kicked-out* part, ticked off," Eddie replies, with a small shrug of his shoulders. "Got myself a job."

"You got kicked out? Your mother, the overbearing monster kicked you *out*?"

Eddie laughed, but it was cold and full of sadness and Bev's eyes turned to worry as she watched as Eddie put the cigarette to his lips and took a long drag and let it out. "Yeah, well I'm too sick for her to handle."

"Sick? Eddie w-"

"I'm gay Bev, *that* is the sickness," Eddie says, his voice going quiet and he doesn't know what else to say. It's quiet between them, and Eddie can't bring himself to say anymore.

"Your mother is the one who is sick, you know that right?" Bev replies, and that brings a smile to Eddie's lips, and he nods his head. "So, I was actually going to go in there, is it good?"

"Yeah, they've got great food, I promise," Eddie says before putting out the smoke and going inside, he gives himself a quick spray of body spray before heading back out to serve.

He noticed Bev come in, being guided by Ethan to an empty booth. After Bev sat down, Ethan came over to him, “You know her?” He questions, raising an eyebrow slightly at him, and he gives a small nod of his head in response. “She’s waiting on some friends, and she asked for you to serve. You okay with that?”

“I am, she’s an old friend. She’s good,” Eddie assures Ethan with a smile, before they separated to serve.

Eventually, Bev’s booth filled up with a lot of familiar faces, one’s he hasn’t seen since he moved across town when he was twelve years old. Five years was a lot, and they’ve changed and grown, and a part of him is sad that he wasn’t there for it , to watch them grow and grow with them , and he wonders if they think the same, or will when he goes to serve them. A lot has changed, but at the same time – nothing has too much. Soon enough, Bev is calling on for a server and Eddie happily walks over with a smile.

“Hello, I’ll be your server for the evening, you ready to order?” Eddie says as he holds his notepad in front of him. His pen tapping against the paper in a soft, *tap, tap, tap* . They order their drinks, and food and he put the order into the system and gets their drinks for them. Carrying them over with ease, handing them out. “If you need anything, don’t be afraid to ask.”

He was about to turn and clear the next table over, when one of them asked, “We would like to know *what happened* to our dear old Eds ,” It was Richie’s voice, and there was a laughing tone to his voice, like they just talked a week ago not the five years it has been , that they’re still the good friends they were.

“I don’t know who this *Eds* you are talking about is,” Eddie replies with a smirk to match the tone, he raises an eyebrow slightly. He takes in everyone properly, and just lets the smirk fall into a smile. Bev and Ben were quite close together in the middle of the U-shaped booth, and he wonders if they’re dating. Stan was next to Richie, and Bill and Mike were on the opposite side. While they’re sitting, he can tell they’ve grown taller, Ben was looking like he was slimming down from the big size that he was. Their faces looked older, no longer that child look he once knew. “But, me? I found a group of friends, and learnt and accepted some shit, and... now here I am. I’m not that

different really.”

Except, he has let his hair grow out and its natural curls were coming through because he stopped using the product his mother made him use two years ago. He was taller, but not by much. He smoked, he drank – all of things he is sure the Losers could never see him doing, not when he refused to smoke whenever Bev or Richie offered them out. His face was forming from the baby like roundness into a more defined shape. There was also the tattoo and piercings he had.

“If you’re still here after my shift, I’ll talk with you, if not – leave your numbers and I’ll make contact. I do miss you guys,” He says before leaving to clear up the tables.

The rest of his shift was going by smoothly, and he was happy to see that his old friends were still hanging around, chatting away and sipping on their drinks and sharing a dessert with each other. He had clocked out, changed out of his uniform when Ethan came out the back – telling Eddie to take the back way out. Confused, Eddie tilted his head and was about to ask why when he saw Harmony coming out the back and grabbing hold of his hand.

“Ethan, they can’t hold her back – you’re the owner, you need to sort it,” Harmony tells Ethan, before turning her attention to Eddie, “Come on, we’re taking my car. We’ll pick yours up in the morning.”

Eddie started to understand, his mother was *here* and there was no way he was willing to face her, and he even if he was, he was *not* going to do it in a public place. Then that was when he remembered his old friends, the *Losers* were still in the diner. The sounds of his mother’s voice were coming through to the back, and he could hear Ethan telling her she couldn’t come out the back.

His breathing started to pick up, and his heart began to race against in his chest. Harmony moved her hands to make him look her right in the eyes, “Count with me kid,” She says, “One... Two... Three... One... Two... Three.”

“One... Two... Three...” He repeats with her as she says the numbers in a slow even pace, she squeezes his hand to help ground him. After a few times, they stop and Harmony is pulling him out the back, and

towards her car.

On the way home, they don't say anything and just drive in silence until Harmony pulls up. They walk into the home, and Harmony's phone went off, she reads the text before asking, "Hey, do you want company? Ethan just texted me, asking if you were okay for those friends at the diner coming over?"

"Not today, but tell Ethan he can give them my number," Eddie says before going up to his room, changing out of his clothes before curling up in his bed. Plugging in his phone, he sees a bunch of text come in from unknown numbers, he smiles a little to himself as he reads the texts with each of their names, and questions in many ways asking if he was alright – he sends them all an 'i'm okay' text, before programming all their names and falling asleep. He wakes up to his alarm going off, so he gets up, showered and dressed for the day of school. Before going to school, he and Harmony go and collect his car.

Maths was his last class today, and he was waiting in the classroom after everyone had left to go home, or do their after-school activities. His teacher told him that his tutor was coming from another school, but the person knew what they were doing and all Eddie had to do was tell him what he was struggling with. The teacher's laptop *ping'd* and then he was telling Eddie his tutor had arrived. He was going to tell his teacher that he didn't need a hand to the office, but he realised that his teacher was sceptic about him actually going, so he slings his bag over his shoulder and followed.

In the office, he saw a few people hanging around, waiting for things and in the corner of the room, there happened to be Richie Tozier sitting there, with his big headphones over his ears and one of the office ladies pointed to him, and his teacher nodded before walking them over to Richie.

"Richard Tozier?" His teacher questions, and as Richie lowers his headphones, he is smiling that huge playful grin of his.

"That would be me," Richie replies as he stands up, then looking over at Eddie and smiling wider. "You the teacher desperate enough to make a call to dear old me?"

Eddie rolled his eyes, and the teacher just gives a shake of his head. "I'm not desperate, but Eddie is. He needs to get his grades up or his coach will kick him off track. Can you help him with what I've sent over, he'll explain where exactly he doesn't understand?"

Richie's eyes gleamed a little, and Eddie feels like this is going to come down on him – his teacher said he was desperate, and while he wasn't - he didn't want to be kicked off the track team. "Can I get a new tutor please?" Eddie asks, looking at his teacher who just shook his head.

"He's one of the top in the area, and you need the help to pass and I can't give it," His teacher said before leaving them too it.

"Where do you want to go to do this?" Richie asks, picking up his bag from the floor and followed as Eddie left the office.

"I don't know, mine maybe, it's not far from here. Did you drive here?" Eddie replies, looking to Richie as he asked the question, his legs automatically taking him towards his car.

"No, Stan dropped me off, I'm still waiting to pay off my car," Richie says with a light shrug of his shoulders.

"Cool, we'll take my car then," They're nearing the school parking lot, and he spots his car nearby, parked right next to Harmony's.

He pulls out a notebook, scribbling down a small note before stuffing it into the very small gap that Harmony leaves with her window. Unlocking his car, he gestures for Richie to climb in as he throws his bag into the back of his car, Richie does the same as he climbs in.

Arriving home, Eddie offers up a snack for Richie and he watches carefully as Richie's eyes roam around the place, probably taking note of the *lack* of signs of his mother.

"I've met your mother, you don't need to be embarrassed by your home, or her," Richie says with a joking tone, it's clear he's caught on to the fact that his mother did not live here. Richie looks at Eddie, a playful smile upon his lips, and Eddie can hear it coming, "I mean I have fucked her."

Eddie let's out a huff, holding out a drink towards Richie before walking towards his room, Richie on his tail. There wasn't much to his room, a little mess on the floor of his clothes and posters and photo's hanging around the room. There was a huge rainbow flag above his bed, with words written by his friends of support given to him after his mother had kicked him out. He will admit, he cried when they gave it to him and they had a huge group hug.

Placing his drink on his desk in the corner of the room, he goes to Harmony's room to borrow her chair that was in her room, and bring it into his room and putting it with his own. Richie had been looking around the room, and when Eddie came back in, he noticed the way Richie's eyes were moving across the words on the flag.

"You're living here?" Richie asks as he takes a seat next to Eddie while Eddie pulled out his books, keeping the Maths ones on his desk. The others going right back into his bag. Eddie gave a small nod of his head in response. "Oh... that makes some of what your mother said last night make sense."

"She kicked me out like six months ago, because I'm 'sick'," Using his fingers to quote the word *sick* , "We can talk about it later, but right now, can we do this?"

Richie nodded his head, and they started on working through the maths problems. Richie listened as Eddie told him what he didn't understand when it came to the equations, and Eddie listened as Richie explained how to do the maths. Still, it wasn't easy for Eddie to get it and it took a while. When he finally got how to do it, Eddie exclaimed happily.

Two months later, and Eddie was in Travis' car as they drove to Derry High for the track meet that was being held there. He told the Losers that he would be there, because over the time that he's seen them again – he's gotten to know them again, and they easily fell right back into their old friendship, like he hasn't been away from them in over five years. Though, he still hasn't really gotten into telling them *why* , he wasn't living with his mother and Bev seems to be keeping that quiet and he eternally grateful for it.

They meet up with their coach and the others at the gym before

changing into their gear. When they walk out, his eyes roam for the Losers and for his other friends, and a smile graces his lips when he notices they're next to each other. Fate did have a funny way of doing things. He and Travis wave towards them before listening to their coach who was giving his usual pep talk. Then, they were off.

It was always thrilling, running around the track – watching as he passed his teammates and competition on the way. It made him smile, gave him a sense of self pride and sense of self. A reminder that his lungs aren't as fragile as his mother always made them out to be, a reminder that he can run and could probably out run the devil he needed too. His body was getting warm and hot, and it was a welcomed feeling because he knew where it was coming from – that it wasn't a form of sickness he needed to worry about.

His mother hated that he ran, she refused to ever come to one of his meets, and at the start – he felt sad about it, like he wasn't making her *proud* for pushing past his 'asthma' and still getting within the top three every time. But, after a while, he learnt to push that feeling aside because his friends came to them, they always did to support him and Travis.

Finding himself in second place, just after Travis, and only by a *beat* they hugged it out and went through the motions that they could probably do in their sleep. Go to coach, speech and praise, then showers and changed back into their clothes. Travis was out first, waiting for him just outside the locker room, when Eddie came out, Travis slung his arm around his shoulders.

"Harms invited your other friends over for dinner, and my cousin is hitching a ride with us," Travis spoke as they started walking out of the place, towards his car. "I've never seen him at any of my meets, until today."

Eddie looks up at Travis, and sees a mischievous look in Travis' eyes that had a smirk to match, causing Eddie to raise an eyebrow slightly, "What's that *look* you got the Trav ? You up to something... not a blind date? *Come on man* ," Eddie says, his voice starting to whine a little at the end. He was okay with not dating, he didn't need too.

Travis laughs a little and soon enough they're at his car, leaning

against the car was Richie with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth. Richie spots them, giving a big wave to them and Travis unlocks the car with his remote and they climb in.

The radio is softly playing, and Richie is leaning forward from his seat in the back so he could be part of the conversation. They stopped by a supermarket to pick up a few things, and for Travis to haul the beer his older half-brother had gotten them into the boot of the car.

Harmony was already in the kitchen, starting to prepare dinner when they arrived, she told them that everyone would arrive around five, and that Travis and Eddie should sort out the spare rooms and mattresses just in case anyone wants to crash the night. No one would want to do it later when they're tired, and they've learnt to prepare these things early – just in case, or everyone use to pile onto the floor at random places over the place, which Ethan and Harmony's mother did not like waking up too. Richie got roped into helping Harmony in the kitchen, and by the time five thirty arrived, the house was filled with around fifteen people.

Eddie, Travis and Seph had gone about fixing out the living room to fit everyone, and soon, everyone was seated and had a plate of food with them. Conversation was light, they talked about school, about their after-school things and hobbies they're doing. When everyone finished eating, Harmony pulled out a few packs of cards before dealing out the cards. They started with a game of fish eventually escalating as everyone started to become less sober, into more risky games.

They somehow had landed on truth or dare as a game, Eddie's mind supplies it's because there are some new people here, that is why someone suggested it. Harmony liked to see how far she could go before she would stop, she liked to know her boundaries with people.

Right now, he's slightly drunk, he can focus and his words aren't too slurred but his mind was foggy as if he has just woken up. He knows he's leaning himself slightly against Richie who was on his right. Jay, one of his friends had asked, who was his first crush, and without hesitation he answers her question, "Bill," He even points towards Bill with a smile on his lips, watching as a red colour started to flood Bill's face and Mike put his arm around Bill, giving him a side hug as

a light laugh left his lips.

“Who *didn't* have a crush on Bill,” Richie remarked, a laugh leaving his lips and Eddie, now that he's been able to hear it again – still thinks that maybe it is still one of his favourite sounds. One of Richie's *genuine* laughs, those he loved when he was younger and Eddie thinks he's going to fall for them again.

The red on Bill's face got deeper, and he ended up burying his head in his hands when Beverly had asked, “Who here has at one point in their life, had a crush on Big Bill?” And every one of the Losers raised their hands.

“Right! My turn! I pick... Lou! Truth or Dare,” Eddie questions, looking at Lou next to Bev and Stan.

It kept on going like that, games changing every half hour, or hour , whenever they got bored of their current game . A few of them fell asleep, so Harmony moved them to some of the spare places to sleep. It was getting late, and everyone was getting tired, but no one really wanted to go to bed, like it was a game of who could stay up the longest. Travis fell asleep, and then it was the Losers, Harmony and Eddie left awake. Or barely, Ben looked like he was about to close his eyes for the rest of the night. But eventually Harmony told everyone to go to bed and showed them all to a mattress, and offered up the other half of her bed to Bev.

Eddie's phone went off as he and Harmony did a *quick* clean of the living room to make it easy for them and the adults in the house in the morning, and Harmony was the one to pick it up before looking up at Eddie with a downturn of her lips, “Dude! I said *stop* with him, Alex isn't worth it – you're hurting yourself.”

“You're not my *mother* Harms,” Eddie replies before grabbing his phone from his friend, sitting on the couch and writing out a quick reply.

Harmony was standing in front of him, her arms cross against her chest, “No, I'm not, because I actually *care* about you. Eddie, sweetie, you're hurting yourself. What are you trying to achieve every time you go back to him? You know I don't care *who* you

sleep with, just... Eddie, he's not good for you. He only does it when he's sad or angry, he'll call you up, or it's late at night and he's just horny."

"But h-,"

"He did not love you, or he would have *not* cheated, or be texting you this late at night asking for a fuck. Is he were you have been going at nights when you sneak out?"

"Not just him... most of the time..." He doesn't finish his sentence, because he looks up and see's the look in Harmony's eyes as she lowers herself so they're face to face, and he sees that she gets what he means.

He'll blame the alcohol in his system, or the fact that he is tired for why he is starting to feel tears in his eyes and why his lips starts to quiver. Harmony reaches up a hand to hold his face, and the tears just fall and she pulls him into a hug.

"I just... I just..." Eddie tries to say as he holds her tight, crying into her shoulder. Maybe he'll also blame the build of emotions. The fact that he hasn't *truly* dealt with everything he's been going through, especially with his mother, because he would just sleep it away and act like it didn't happen, or it wasn't effecting him that much and then it was like *Alex* had a radar and would have called for a 'good time' within the next few days, and he went because it made him forget about his troubles. You could probably label it as a self-destructive behaviour, it *was* that because it wasn't healthy, and maybe – that is why he did it too, yet another *fuck you* to his mother, even if she would never know of it.

After he stops crying, they pull apart and she gives a small kiss to the top of his head, telling him to remember that she is there, or that Ethan was, or any of their friends were before they headed up to their rooms. Walking into his room, he notices a lump in his bed – and there was two people on one of the mattresses laying on his floor.

Quietly, taking off his jeans and shirt, he climbs into his bed – smiling a little to himself when he hears the familiar mumbles of his

friend as he moves in the bed at the new addition. In the faintly light that is coming in from the gap in his curtains, he can just see the silhouette of Richie, just able to tell by the curl in his hair.

Eddie reaches a hand over to push some of the curls off of Richie's face, smiling a little to himself again when he hears a soft content sigh leave Richie lips, and he thinks to himself, *I'm falling again, and no mother to take me away this time* .

The next day, he was hanging out with the Losers before he had to go to work and he notices he is a little *too close* to Richie, but he doesn't think too much about it. It was normal back when they were younger, nothing was different now, they were just older and Eddie felt more secure within himself. He got a message on his phone, it was from Alex and he was going to ignore it, and ignore it completely, actually take the advice Harmony and all his other friends have given him about the other. But there was a *buzzword* that made him confused and he opened it up.

ALEX (DO NOT ANSWER): your mother is a fucking physco ! no wonder you kept me a fucking secret! fucking freak i tell you!

With a confused expression, he paused where he was and flicked a quick 'what are you talking about?' back to Alex. His friends were ahead of him already, but he caught up quickly. They only all stopped when Eddie's phone went off, and it kept going even though he ignored it, Stan told him to just answer it.

"What Alex?" Eddie asks in line of answering the call, he looks up and sees his friends looking at him. All with curious looks on their faces, he hasn't told them *much* about Alex, other than he was an ex.

"Your mum is a fucking *bitch* dude. Started blaming me for making you *dirty and sick* ," Alex shoots back down the line.

"How would she *know* ? She never met you..." Eddie's body freezes, and a bad feeling starts to wash over him. He tries to keep the fear out of his voice when he asks, "What did you do Alex?"

"I just made a trip 'round to your house, you weren't there. Your mother said you haven't been home in months. Asked me how I knew

you, I told her *everything* . Even showed her a few photos,” Eddie can hear the *smug* smile that was spread across Alex’s lips as he said those words.

“You took *photos of us*? As in... as in...” Eddie’s breathing started to hitch and his heart was racing against his chest. He could feel tears starting to brim his eyes.

“Yes... *those* kind, y-” Eddie didn’t hear the rest of the sentence because Bill was taking the phone out of his hand, putting it up to his own ear.

Eddie could see the anger rise quickly in Bill’s face, the way it went from worry for Eddie to *pure anger* at the words spoken on the other end. Bill’s words were drowned out by the overwhelming pounding in his ears, and his friends were trying to get his breathing to a steady pace. He was trying to remember the thing Harmony does with him. He is sure he hears someone ask about an inhaler, and he just shakes his head. He hasn’t used that in almost two years, he broke that habit – but it seems like he could do with one right now, just to give himself the illusion of setting his breathing right.

They all go over to a bench on the sidewalk, Bev was telling a story, Richie t elling a few jokes, Ben t elling him what he was designing, Stan and Mike were with Bill trying to calm him down from the phone call before they came over. All with stories, and they just talked away because they really didn’t know what to do. Eventually, his breathing and heart rate slowed down, and he was exhausted but he had to go to work. He could pretend that he was fine, he could do that.

That was how he went by the next few months, pretending he was *okay* . His mother called him *multiple* times, he tortured himself by listening to them late at night. He ended up crying himself to sleep a lot of nights. He was just slowly spiralling down, he was still managing to keep up his grades up, still making the tutoring sessions with Richie. But he was slowly declining all outings with his friends, with all of them.

He knows his friends were getting worried, they all tried to talk to him, get him to talk and ask what was wrong. They asked it so much

he felt like screaming, that *no* he was not okay. He could never face his mother ever again, even if he wanted too. She hated *him*; she had repeated it multiple times. That he was *sick* and dirt y, that he was so fucking filthy and dirt y, that she failed as a mother. There had been multiple voice messages with her crying about it.

He stopped even skipping classes, not that his teachers cared – they liked that part. They didn't see anything wrong, just that he was quieter in classes. His coach picked something up, but dismissed it as soon as Eddie said he was fine, that he was just having a bad day. He'd been having a lot of those recently. Seeing Alex in the halls never did help, though – when he punched Alex in the face? That did feel good, to him – not to Alex, or the fact that he got suspended. Mrs Roisin, Harmony's mother sat him down when she had to take him home.

She had asked him what has been going on, that Harmony and their friends have all expressed worry about him and so has his coach and Ethan. He tries to shake her off, he tries for a good hour and a half – but eventually he breaks down crying, burying his head into his hands as she comes to comfort him. The door to the home opens, and he can hear the light footsteps of Harmony walking towards them, before walking away. Mrs Roisin probably gave her daughter a look that said *not right now*. And Eddie was a bit thankful for that, but – still, he didn't really say anything, just promising (a false promise) that he is getting better, that he was just in a funk. That he'll go to the therapist appointment she booked for him. She told him that she has sorted out his shift at the diner with Ethan already so he doesn't have to worry about it.

He doesn't go to the therapist, instead he had called up Travis' older brother asking for some good alcohol, and was happy when he was greeted at his doorstep with them. Harmony was working today, and Mrs Roisin was too and works late hours, and Ethan was almost always at work for the after school to dinner rush. So, the house was empty, he had it to himself.

He handed over the money he promised before going up to his room with the booze, opening it up and throwing the lid to the side as he brought it up to his lips. He nearly tripped as he reached the top of the stairs as he took a sip, he just let out a small laugh. Once in his

room he puts on his music, blaring it loud enough to make him forget, and hopefully not too loud enough to get a noise complaint.

It's hours later, and he's just been nursing (downing) his bottle of jack – ignoring his phone when he saw Mrs Roisin call him, when an unknown number called him, when Travis called, when Stan called him, when; Harmony, Bill, Bev, Mike and the rest of his friends called him. He ignored them all as he started to cry and scream until his throat hurt, he's drunk out of his mind as he makes a group chat with all of his friends, and those he knows cares about him.

the group **sorry** was made by eddie k.

eddie k. added harms r., richie t., bev m., jay m., travis s., lou e., bill d., stan u., ethan n., and others to the group chat

eddie k. i need everyone to see this, I'm just sorry. I'm so fucking sorry. So god dam sorry. I just i love you all, i love you guys, I'm glad i had you in my life. I'm sorry.

He puts his phone on silent as he stumbles his way towards Harmony's room, he's looking for her medication. She was on Adderall for her ADHD, but he was coming up extremely empty – she must have taken it with her, she never took the whole bottle with her. Since when did she start taking the bottle with her, the thought is there for a second before he feels like he is going to throw up, he tries to make it to the bathroom – and he just, *barely* got the toilet seat up before he threw up into it.

A new set of tears fell down his face, the gross feeling of having just thrown up making him feel sick again and it happens again, and again until he is just dry heaving and crying into the toilet bowl. He flushes it a few times, not being able to stand the smell or sight of it. There were somethings that would never change, he should move from the bottom of the bathroom floor but he can't. He doesn't want to move, he just wants to lay there and just, go to sleep – maybe forever.

He couldn't tell you how long he was in there with his eyes closed, but he can tell you that he felt someone pick him up off the floor, opening his eyes – he sees a familiar face, one he can't pinpoint right

now in his drunken state of mind. He hears murmurs of, *Richie honey, open up the car right now. No time for an ambulance. He's going to be okay; I promise Rich. Here, I have some water sweetie, give it to him, and call up your friends. Keep him awake if you can sweetie. We're almost there Richie, he's going to be okay.*

When he wakes up, Richie was sitting in a chair beside him while Harmony and her mother were sitting in the ones in the corner . They were all asleep, he lets out a groan because his stomach was hurting and he felt like utter *crap*. He was in a hospital, that much he knows and he finds the button to call for his nurse, he was trying to do all this without waking up the others in the room. A few moments later, the familiar face popped in with a light smile upon her lips, the name comes to his foggy mind, *Maggie Tozier* .

“Hey Mrs Tozier ,” Eddie says to greet her, he can hear his voice it’s gravelly and hoarse, it probably will take a few days before it sounds like his own again. He tries for a smile, but it’s weak upon his lips.

“How are you feeling?” She asks, walking around the room and checking the things she needed too. He tells her that he still feels like shit, but – he was better than he was hours ago passed out on the bathroom floor. “That’s good to hear. You gave all your friends a scare there Eddie. This place was full, we had to send everyone home. No one called your mother; Richie did his best to explain in his hysteric state. She kicked you out?”

He gave a small nod of his head; he didn’t trust his voice not to break if he did speak. Richie stirs in his sleep, as if he heard his name being called by his mother – there even was a small mumble of *five more minutes* , causing the two awake to laugh a little.

“Her loss, in the morning, you’ll be seeing a few doctors – specifically a psychiatrist,” Maggie says, giving him a smile to reassure him. “Your friends believe you were attempting to kill yourself with your actions. We want to make sure you’re going to be okay, okay.” He nods his head, “Now, go back to sleep and I’ll see you in the morning. I’ll visit before my shift ends; I will need to take that one home.”

He does as he is told, he falls back asleep, waking up when it starts to get light and he can hear footsteps around the room, and quiet

voices. Opening his eyes, he sees that the room is filled with all his friends, most of them had their bags with them, they were sneaking in a quick visit before school and Eddie couldn't help but smile at the thought.

Everyone tried to hug him at once, and they all laughed before Maggie ushered everyone out because Eddie needed to eat before the doctor was coming in. Richie and Harmony stayed in the room, pinching things off of his plate, it was quiet because he feels like neither of them really knew what to say now. After he was done, Maggie came in telling her son they were going, and he was to still go to school. She promised him that he can come back after school.

A few doctors came in, and Harmony only left the room when the psychiatrist wanted to evaluate him. He was going to be staying in the hospital for a few days, to make sure his BAC was normal, and that he was going to be okay. He tried to start conversations with Harmony, but they just fell flat and dried out – and even her attempts did. After lunch, she makes him scoot over so she is laying on the bed beside him without knocking out any of the things he needed in. Though, they took out his IV drip earlier, he just had to promise to keep drinking water. It's quiet for a while before he feels a few tears fall onto the hospital gown he was wearing. They were Harmony's tears, and now he felt like crying too. Tears formed in his own eyes and slowly feel down his cheek.

Eddie tries to say something, say it'll be okay, that he'll be okay but he doesn't think he can mean them. He still feels so hollow, he *knows* people care about him, people who *truly* care about him but that sinking feeling was still there, so he just presses a soft kiss to the top of her head.

The next few days, whenever his friends could, they would come in and see him and stay as long as they could, he heard that his mother tried to come in and visit him but Mrs Roisin and Maggie and the psychiatrist told her it was needed that it would not be in the best interest of the patient if she visited. He was being released today, Mrs Roisin was there to take him home.

When they get home, she cooks up something better than what he's been having at the hospital, she tells him that Ethan will be home

soon and they can discuss his work, then she was taking him to his appointment with the therapist he was referred too, that Harmony would pick him up and after that, they can do whatever they wanted – so long as no alcohol was involved, that she was as of now making the house alcohol free. She handed him his plate of food, giving a soft kiss to the top of his head before going off into the living room, he sat at the small kitchen table eating the food until Ethan came along. Eddie said he would be okay to make his next shift, and finished off his food and went and sat in the living room with Mrs Roisin who was just watching some old classic tv shows before they went to the appointment.

Eddie's weeks after finishing his suspension always end up in some kind of mix of, *school, work, therapy, track, tutor session or hanging out with his friends* . One day, Travis had mentioned that his older brother got arrested for selling alcohol to minors, Eddie felt guilty about that, but Travis reassured him it wasn't Eddie's fault – that his brother was bound to get caught due to how often he did it. He had told Eddie this as he changed the bandages on his hands from a fight he apparently got into.

Right now, he was sitting outside on the front steps of his home, a cigarette hanging from his lips as he played with the lighter in his hand. Lighting it before letting it out, light, out, light, out. Over and over until he finally brings it up and puts the flame to the end of the cigarette. Taking in a long drag, Eddie closes his eyes and leans his head up, blowing the smoke out so it floats above him.

His phone was sitting beside him, he's thought about calling up his friends – he wanted to talk to someone, he wanted – he didn't know what he wanted, but he didn't want to bother Harmony or her family, they were already doing too much as it is. They were more his family than his own mother, and a part of him hurts knowing that fact. He doesn't think that part will ever stop hurting, no matter how hard he tries.

It was late at night, the stars were out tonight and Eddie smiled a little to himself, for no other reason than just that it looked pretty, and he liked that. Every now and then, a car would go by, or a cat would come by and he would look at the animal with curiosity as he watched it walk, watch it sit or whatever it wanted.

Prom was coming up, his mind tells him and while none of his friends really had dates, they always went as a group – he felt like asking the Losers, he had brought it up with his other friends and they were all for it. They'd each take a Loser, and have a great old time. Eddie knew which Loser he'd like to take, maybe that's why when he picks up his phone, he finds Richie's number and calls it. There was going to be a chance that Richie was asleep, so Eddie was ready to hang up after the third ring, but before the fourth could finish, the line picked up.

"Eddie? Are you okay?" Richie questions automatically, and Eddie isn't surprised by the way his voice fills with concern, it's only been three months since he gave himself alcohol poisoning (that's what he's calling it, despite him knowing what it truly was deep down).

Of course, his friends would be *worried* when he calls them late at night.

"I'm fine Rich, I was just thinking," Eddie replies, taking another drag of his smoke and letting it out as he continued on, "My school prom is coming up, I was wondering if you'd come with me. It's cool if you don't, me and my friends only ever just go as a group of friends anyway. We we'r -"

"Yeah, I'll go with you," Richie cuts Eddie's rambles off, and Eddie smiles to himself as he thinks about how that night will go. "Harmony asked Bill, and told him what you guys are doing. It's going to be a great night."

Oh ... Harmony had beaten him to asking the Losers out, "You're okay with faking to be my date? You'd be the first guy I've ever openly *shown* this too, in front of my school." Eddie was trying not to let his disappointment fill his voice, Richie probably thinks this was just as friends – that Eddie was asking Richie, just to make stories line up or something like that. "Uh... I'll see you tomorrow, got that tutor session."

He hung up before Richie could respond and he finished off his cigarette before heading back inside, deciding that he should probably go to sleep.

Prom was now a few days away, Harmony was taking Bill, Lou was

taking Mike, Jay was taking Stan, Travis was taking Ben, and Seph was taking Bev. They thought it was a great idea, not having them all be so *heterosexually* defined in their group. They were going to take a limo that Jay's father was putting out for.

Laying on his bed with his hands under his head, he was looking up at the ceiling while Richie was sitting in the chair that was at his desk going through Eddie's homework. Seeing if there was anywhere Eddie needed more help on, over the months, Richie has taken to helping Eddie with his English homework as well as his Maths work. Richie was talking about something in Eddie's English paper, but Eddie must not have heard because Richie is standing over the bed, and all Eddie wants to do is pull Richie down and kiss him.

"Are you even listening Eds?" Richie muses, raising an eyebrow as he looks down at Eddie.

"Sorry, did you say something?" Eddie replies automatically with a huge smile upon his lips, and he loves to watch as Richie's lips fight the urge to turn upward into a smile.

"Oh my god, you are such an asshole, come on! You will fail if you don't listen, now, get your ass up and get over to the desk dipshit," Richie says grabbing hold of Eddie's arm and pulling him up, Eddie put all his weight down and it took Richie a while, but eventually he managed to pull Eddie up into a sitting position.

He must have decided that was all he was bothering to do, because he went over to the desk before bringing everything over onto the bed, plopping it all right down in front of Eddie. Richie started talking about the work, and Eddie started to listen, fingers picking at the chipping nail polish on his nails. Seph was going repaint them before the prom, he wonders what colour she was going to pick. His mind then wonders what would Richie's nails look like painted, and Eddie decided Richie would look good with them. Then again, Eddie thinks Richie looks good in anything, even those stupid Hawaiian shirts he's refused to give up from his childhood, Eddie believes they'll follow Richie into adulthood.

The thought of seeing Richie older, more mature and so happy and full of life, well that made Eddie happy. Eddie didn't care *how*

Richie was happy when he was older, just that he *was* , even if that meant he wasn't the reason for it. Yeah, Eddie wishes he could give it to Richie, but there is a part of him doesn't think he will be that guy for Richie.

A nudge at his shoulder, knocks him out of his thoughts and he looks at Richie who had a bit off an angered look upon his features, "Eddie! Come on! What are y-"

Eddie cuts Richie off with an impulse decision to kiss him, it was so impulsive and he was quick to pull away, " *Fuck !*" He exclaims, thinking he's just ruined his friendship with Richie, that this was just too much. He probably just fucked up, and *shit* he was starting to panic and Richie notices .

Richie takes hold of Eddie's hand, giving them a small squeeze before getting Eddie to look him in the eyes, "Repeat after me," Richie says before going into a slow count of *One, Two, Three* . Richie repeats it over, and Eddie is soon to join in and slowly his panic was washing away with every count. When he was calm enough, Richie let go of his hands, moving all the books and pens off of the bed then he is telling Eddie to lay down and he does. Richie laid himself down next to Eddie on his side so he could look at Eddie. Eddie turns on his side so they're looking at each other, there was a tear falling down his cheek.

"I'm sorry I shouldn't have done that," Eddie mumbles, moving to wipe the tear away. He sucks in a deep breath, letting it out slowly before continuing on to say, "I know all of us are going to the prom together, I just..." He closes his eyes, frustrated that he couldn't get the words he wanted out, or figure out how he was going to word them. The words were getting jumbled up all in his head and he was struggling to find the right way to let them go out into the world.

Richie moves himself closer to Eddie, placing a gentle hand upon Eddie's cheek, causing the other's eyes to look at him, "You want a *true* date to it?" Richie questions, his thumb caressing Eddie's cheek and slowly moving towards Eddie's lip, where he gently brushed his thumb against his lip, the feeling of the ring cool against his thumb.

Eddie's mind was racing, and this time as his heart was picking up

pace, he knew why and it wasn't because of a panic attack, but due to the nervousness he was feeling. Richie was being so *soft* with him, and yeah Eddie knows Richie can be soft, he's been on the receiving end of it multiple times. He knows Richie cares, and he knows the ways Richie shows it isn't always like this, it's in his jokes or the way he tries to get you to laugh. Eddie loves it, he *loves* Richie and he doesn't think he ever stopped. Over the past months, he has come to that realisation, he still very much liked Richie. He had fallen, once again for Richie and now, it feels like Richie just *might* be returning them.

He's looking at Richie, it's been a few minutes and Eddie realises he hasn't responded to Richie's question, so he gives a small nod of his head. Richie was close to him; he could feel Richie's breath on his face. It's quiet for a moment, then Richie gets up and grabs his things, "Okay, have fun at the prom, I hope the guy you're going with is good to you."

Before Eddie can process what was happening, Richie was out the door and out into his car, leaving. Not believing what had just happened, he went into Harmony's room, finding her on her laptop typing away. She looks up and gives a smile to Eddie, he watches as it falls from her lips into a worried downturn. She was quick to set aside her laptop, and Eddie tells her what had just happened. After she presses a soft kiss to the top of his head, before grabbing her laptop back and quickly sending off a few messages. Eddie could see the gears in her brain working, he goes down to the kitchen and cooks them dinner.

She tells him to not worry about it, that she's fixing it, that they're all still going to prom if it's the last thing she does. There was a look of determination in her eyes that made him scared, not for himself, but maybe for Richie because once she set her mind to something, she would *get it*.

It was prom night, and his friends were getting ready at his house, the Losers were doing their own thing. He asked Harmony what was happening, and she told him that her plan was working and he trusted her so, he just continued to get ready. The limo arrived and the all filed in, and chatted away until they arrived at their destination.

None of them went in just yet, Harmony said they had to wait. A few minutes later, Travis handed out everyone their tickets just as the Losers walked up to them, he noticed Richie was there looking a little *sullen* , like he didn't understand why he was there. Bev and Ben were behind him to stop him from trying to escape, Stan was at his side, while Bill and Mike walked at the front.

Everyone greeted their dates, and took them inside until it was just Eddie and Richie left of the group outside. It was silent for a few moments, before Eddie decided to hold out the other ticket he held towards Richie, Richie looks at it with a curious look before looking up at Eddie.

"What? Your date say no, and now you've fallen back to me? You really are desperate ," Richie quips, and Eddie rolls his eyes.

"No fuckwit," Eddie huffs out, "My date said *yes* , but then he was being a dick and now, here I am, holding out his ticket *to him* ."

"What?" Richie questions, like he was trying to process Eddie's words and what they meant. "But your- *oh, I'm* your date. You wanted me to be... you wanted this to be a *true* date. Oh, I'm stupid."

"Yeah, you are, but I still like you, now – come on, or they'll come out and drag us in," Eddie says holding out his hand towards Richie, with a smile upon his lips. The smiling growing bigger when Richie takes hold of it and they walked in.

Everyone had gone home, and Richie was laying on Eddie's bed as they were making out, hands moving over new places to explore. Their jackets were on his floor, and Richie's shirt was open but they were just content with making out, Harmony had opened up the door and threw a box of condoms at them, telling them to use protection causing them to crack up laughing. Eventually they stopped making out and just laid next to each other, Eddie's fingers tracing random patterns on Richie's bare chest until he could hear Richie lightly snore. With a smile upon his lips, he leans in to press a kiss to Richie's cheek, "I love you," He says in a quiet voice before closing his eyes and letting sleep take over him.